

What is Claimed is:

1. A biopsy instrument for retrieving body tissue, having a longitudinal axis and comprising:

a distal end adapted for entry into a patient's body; and

5 a cutting element disposed on said instrument, said cutting element being actuatable between a radially retracted position and a radially extended position, relative to said axis, and being movable in said radially extended position to isolate a desired tissue specimen from surrounding tissue by defining a peripheral margin about said tissue specimen. G

10 2. The biopsy instrument as recited in Claim 1, wherein said cutting element is rotatable about said axis in said radially extended position to isolate said desired tissue specimen. 1,11

15 3. The biopsy instrument as recited in Claim 1, wherein said cutting element is movable axially in said radially extended position to isolate said desired tissue specimen. 1,17

4. The biopsy instrument as recited in Claim 1, said distal end comprising an electrosurgical cutting element for cutting tissue and facilitating advancement of said instrument into the patient's body. G

5. The biopsy instrument as recited in Claim 2, and further comprising a shaft disposed along said axis. G

6. The biopsy instrument as recited in Claim 5, wherein said cutting element

comprises an electrosurgical cutting element.

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7. The biopsy instrument as recited in Claim 5, said instrument comprising a monopolar instrument wherein the electrosurgical cutting element comprises an active electrode thereof.

8. The biopsy instrument as recited in Claim 5, said instrument comprising a bipolar instrument wherein the electrosurgical cutting element comprises an active electrode thereof.

9. The biopsy instrument as recited in Claim 8, wherein a portion of said shaft comprises a return electrode of the bipolar instrument.

10. The biopsy instrument as recited in Claim 5, and further comprising a sheath which is axially movable between distal and proximal positions for selectively covering and uncovering the cutting element.

11. The biopsy instrument as recited in Claim 10, and further comprising a proximal driver unit for controlling radial expansion and retraction of said cutting element and rotation of said cutting element about said axis.

12. The biopsy instrument as recited in Claim 11, wherein the proximal driver unit further controls axial movement of said shaft and axial movement of said sheath.

13. The biopsy instrument as recited in Claim 5, wherein said cutting element